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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Saturday, July 25, 1936

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Subject: "CHICKEN CANNING NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Another Saturday. And another letter from our Department of Agriculture correspondent who is reporting again from the canning kitchens of the Bureau of Home Economics. Her news today is about canning chicken. Maybe you buy your canned chicken. Or maybe you put up your own birds. Whichever you do, you are probably interested in the latest word on safe and successful home-canning. Well, here it is, just as our correspondent writes it.

Says she: "Whenever I see a can of chicken, I think of my emergency shelf -- and what a comfort it is to have a few cans of chicken there, ready for unexpected company or a rush meal. A supply of chicken, all cooked and waiting for a hurry-call, means that you can make chicken salad, creamed chicken, chicken and noodles, and many another good dish on a moment's notice.

"Some of the best canned chicken nowadays is put up at home. Many farm housewives are canning birds from their home flock both for their own use and for sale. Thanks to the investigations of the foods people, we know today the good and safe methods for canning chicken. I am mentioning the subject right now because July and August are probably the best months of the year for putting up chicken at home. This is the season for culling the flock. And those culls will make delicious canned chicken. The nice, plump, 2-year-old hens that are no longer profitable to keep because they have stopped laying are the very best birds to can, because their meat has a better flavor and texture after the processing than the meat of young tender chickens.

"According to Miss Mabel Stienbarger, who is in charge of the canning investigations of the Bureau, any home-canner has her choice of a variety of ways to put up chicken. At the Bureau they have had good results in canning chicken both with and without bones and also in canning chicken salad, chicken-and-noodles, sandwich spread, and soup. Among the soup possibilities, are chicken broth, chicken-noodle soup, and chicken-gumbo soup. Miss Stienbarger doesn't recommend canning fried chicken because she has found that chicken fried before canning is almost sure to be hard and dry.

"If you are interested in equipment for the job, Miss Stienbarger will tell you emphatically that you need a steam-pressure canner for putting up chicken in any form. Like other non-acid foods, chicken must have processing at a temperature above boiling, which it can only get with steam pressure. Miss Stienbarger advises against using sheet-iron or copper pans or kettles for canning chicken. She says if you prepare meat in contact with these metals, it is likely to darken later in the can. Chicken darkens this way more easily

than other meats. You can can chicken successfully either in glass jars or plain tin cans. Use either pint or quart glass jars and either No. 2 or No. 3 tin cans. But your chicken will have better flavor and texture if canned in the small containers.

"For economy and convenience, Miss Stienbarger believes in canning the meaty pieces like breasts, shoulders, thighs, legs and upper wings together, and using the bony pieces for chicken broth and for sandwich spread. The bony pieces include the wings, backs, necks, and feet after skinning. Giblets she suggests putting up by themselves in small containers -- pint or half-pint jars, or No. 1 or 2 cans. And, she finds that for the best product, each kind of giblet should be canned by itself, that livers and gizzards don't make good company in a can.

"The bony pieces she puts right into the kettle first thing after preparing them. She covers these with lightly salted cold water and simmers them until the meat falls from the bone. Then she removes the meat and adds it to the mixture for sandwich spread. (By the way, a little skin is good in the sandwich-spread mixture, if you grind it up.) After taking out the meat, skim off the fat, and boil down the broth until it is concentrated enough for canning.

"As for the nice meaty pieces, you can can them with or without the bone. If you leave the bone in, the processing time will be shorter, because the bone helps the heat to penetrate the meat. Also bone gives added flavor.

"After preparing the meat, the next step is precooking. If you are canning in tin, you can pack the raw meat closely into the cans and heat it right in the cans before sealing. This takes more time and stove-space than other ways of precooking, but it saves flavor and keeps all the meat juice in the can. By the way, of course, you put the salt in each can before putting in the meat. Set the filled but open cans in the boiling water on a rack and boil them from 40 to 50 minutes so that the meat will be heated and steaming all through. Then seal the cans at once while the meat is still steaming hot and process them in the pressure canner -- never in just a boiling-water bath.

"Another way to precook chicken is to heat it in the oven in shallow pans until the pieces are steaming hot, through and through. Then pack them at once in containers and process. The third way to precook is to place the raw meat in boiling water, then lower the heat, and simmer for 10 or 12 minutes. This is the quickest method but does not give quite as rich a flavor to the meat as precooking in the cans or in the oven.

"Processing is the next step and last step in canning. Miss Stienbarger says it is most important to keep the containers hot until all are ready and then process them at once. Each different chicken product and each different size and kind of container requires a special length of time in the canner. You need a reliable canning chart as a time and pressure guide. The time of processing varies from 55 minutes to 2 hours.

"That is a brief glimpse of the process of canning chicken at home by the latest approved methods. Some other day perhaps I can write you some of the details of canning chicken specialties like liver paste or chicken-and-noodles to say nothing of sandwich spread, chicken salad, and soup."

That concludes this week's letter from Washington about home-canning methods for chicken, as worked out by the Bureau of Home Economics.

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